

Myths and Facts of Flu Vaccine

FALSE: The flu is just like a bad cold.

Influenza (flu) is far more dangerous than a bad cold. It's a disease of the lungs, and it can lead to pneumonia. Each year about 114,000 people in the United States are hospitalized and about 20,000 people die because of the flu. Most people who die are 65 or older.

FALSE: The flu shot can give you the flu.

Flu shots are made from killed influenza viruses. These cannot give you the flu.

MAYBE: Even if I get a flu shot, I can still get the flu.

This can happen, but the flu shot usually protects most people from the flu. However, the flu shot will not protect you from other viruses that can cause illnesses that sometimes feel like the flu.

FALSE: The flu shot isn't 100% effective. I'm better off getting the flu.

No vaccine is 100% effective. However, if you get a flu shot but still get the flu, you are likely to be far less sick than if you never got the flu shot.

FALSE: The side effects are worse than the flu.

The worst side effect you're likely to get is a sore arm. The risk of rare allergic reactions is far less than the risk of severe complications from getting the flu.

FALSE: Only the very old and the very sick need to get a flu shot.

Both adults and children who are in good health need a flu shot to stay healthy. Even if you aren't at high risk for complications from the flu, you should get a flu shot to prevent the flu. By getting a shot you will also protect everyone you live with and others you may come in contact with.

FALSE: December is too late to get a flu shot.

The flu shot can be given before or during flu season. While the best time to get a flu shot is in October or November, a flu shot in December or even January will still protect you against the flu.

Information provided by the Center for Disease Prevention and Control, National Immunization Program